

## THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

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It was the plan of Christ that his personal ministry should be directly succeeded by that of "the apostles whom he had chosen," and who, with the exception of Paul, were, during that ministry, related to him as disciples, followed him from place to place, heard his words, saw his miracles, and were on terms of special intimacy with him, and to whom, at different times for forty days after his resurrection and prior to his ascension, he showed himself alive "by many infallible proofs," giving them "commandments" as to their future work, and "speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God." What, if anything, did Christ say to these apostles, either before his death or after his resurrection, in respect to the question of their inspiration, as the means of qualifying them for the great work assigned to them? There is no difficulty in finding an answer to this question, and, in that answer, the doctrine of inspiration as stated by Christ himself and subsequently repeated by his apostles.

The Gospel of Luke records the following promise made by Christ to these apostles: "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." This supposes that they would be called to answer before ecclesiastical and civil authorities for their preaching of the Gospel. The direction of Christ is that, in such emergencies, they should take no thought beforehand as to the answer to be made. The promise is that the Holy Ghost would at the time and on each occasion come to their help as a teacher and supply them with ideas and words. He would teach them what they "ought to say"; and in this sense they would be inspired.

A more comprehensive promise is recorded in the Gospel of John, made just prior to the death of Christ, and in the following words: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth." "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, he shall testify of me; and ye shall also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come."

This language, beyond all question, refers to the extraordinary endowment of inspiration, with which, as Christ expressly declares, his apostles would be invested when

they went forth as the preachers of his Gospel. The source of the inspiration would be the Holy Ghost, spoken of as "the Comforter, and also as 'the Spirit of truth.'" The inspiration itself is presented in the following terms of description: 1. It would "teach" the apostles "all things." 2. It would "guide" them "into all truth." 3. It would "bring all things" to their "remembrance" that Christ had previously said to them. 4. It would "testify" to them of Christ, and enable them to "bear witness" concerning him. 5. It would show them "things to come," and thus invest them with the prophetic power. The inspiration, thus described in the words of the promise, tho not superseding or suspending the use of their faculties, would nevertheless so direct, guide, and control the action of these faculties, alike in respect to ideas and the selection of words for their expression, as fully to qualify them to teach and preach the Gospel of Christ, to recall and repeat the sayings of Jesus without error, and to predict events in the future history of the world. Such is the kind and such the degree of the inspiration promised to the apostles by the Saviour just prior to his death. It was to be *plenary* inspiration in the most complete sense.

Christ after his resurrection, and before his ascension into heaven, as we learn from the book of Acts, spake still further on this subject, and substantially renewed the promise previously made. The record says: "And being assembled together with them, [he] commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Here we have a distinct reference to the promise of the Holy Ghost already made, accompanied with the direction that the apostles should wait in Jerusalem for its fulfillment, in the form of a baptism of the Holy Ghost would become a fact "not many days hence."

The apostles asked the risen Saviour whether he would "at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel;" and having told them that it was not for them "to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power," he proceeded at once to say: "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." This is clearly another reference to the promised inspiration of the Holy Ghost, here spoken of as being a "power" which the apostles would receive when the Holy Ghost came upon them, and in the possession of which "power" they would become witnesses for Christ, even "unto the uttermost part of the earth."

We thus have the apostolic inspiration in the form of promise, and in that promise defined as to its source, its nature, and extent.

Was this promise fulfilled? This is the next question to be considered.

The apostles, immediately after the ascension of Christ into Heaven, went back to Jerusalem, as they were directed to do, and there remained, meeting in "an upper room," and continuing "with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with the brethren"—in all numbering "about one hundred and twenty" persons. The day of Pentecost was near at hand, and soon it came; and what occurred in this "upper room" is thus described in the Book of Acts: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." These persons were Jews, and were naturally able to speak only in the two languages of their own country; but now they are suddenly invested with the power to speak in "other tongues," and they did so, "as the Spirit gave them utterance." The baptism of the Holy Ghost, according to the promise, has come upon them, and the promised "power" has come with it.

This Pentecostal marvel, especially the miracle of tongues, was speedily "noised abroad" thruout Jerusalem; and when "the multitude came together, and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language," and when "they were all amazed and marveled" at what they heard, Peter, now "filled with the Holy Ghost," and speaking "as the Spirit gave" him "utterance," preached his first sermon, and explained to the Jews the events of that memorable day. He told them that these events were not the effects of drinking "new wine," as some mockers had alleged, and that they were the fulfillment of a prediction made by the prophet Joel, which he quoted and explained. He called their attention to Jesus of Nazareth, as a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs which God had by him done in the midst of them, as they themselves also knew, but whom they had with wicked hands crucified and slain. Referring to a prophecy made by David in respect to the resurrection of Christ, he then said: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

Peter's explanation of the Pentecostal marvel makes it the fulfillment of Christ's promise in respect to the Holy Ghost, who, according to the promise, would come and endow his apostles in the manner and to the extent set forth in the promise, and who, according to the record in the second chapter